



Storrow Drive Tunnel Reconstruction Project

Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Unit
EOEA Project #13777

SCOPING SESSION

May 11, 2006 – Shriner's Hospital Auditorium
2 PM

Deirdre Buckley of the MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Environmental Policy Act Unit (MEPA Unit), opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. She said that the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) filed an Environmental Notification Form (ENF) on the Storrow Drive Tunnel Project with MEPA, which triggers a public review process. State agencies are required by law to study the environmental consequences of their actions and take measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate damage to the environment. Ms. Buckley explained that MEPA review is not a permitting process resulting in approval or disapproval of a project. It is a process that requires public study, disclosure and development of feasible mitigation for a proposed project.

Once an ENF is filed, it triggers a public review and comment period, followed by a Certificate from the Secretary of Environmental Affairs outlining the scope of the project, including what alternatives must be studied, what environmental impacts must be analyzed and what techniques this analysis must follow. The Secretary's Certificate for this project will be issued by June 23, 2006.

The alternatives analysis and other information appear in an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). For state agency projects, MEPA jurisdiction is broad and can cover a wide range of impacts.

The EIR is subject to a public review of 30 days, followed by a determination by the Secretary stating whether the draft EIR is adequate. In the case of a DEIR, the Secretary identifies any issues remaining for review in the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR).

Ms. Buckley said that DCR has already done a good job of soliciting input from the public in a series of meetings that has helped to shape the alternatives. The scoping sessions provide an important opportunity for her to understand community concerns. She stressed that the communities of interest need to submit **written** comments during the comment period, which has been extended by DCR's request to 45 days (from 30), and closes on June 13, 2006. Comments should include the EOE reference number (#13777) and be directed to Ms. Buckley at the MEPA Unit (Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, MEPA Unit, 100 Cambridge St., Suite 900, Boston 02114-2524).

Project Proponent

Ms. Buckley recognized DCR Commissioner Stephen Burrington, representing the project proponent, to make opening remarks. Commissioner Burrington greeted the audience and said that Karl Haglund would outline the elements of the project before the meeting was opened for questions and comments. Commissioner Burrington stressed the importance of the MEPA process for a complex and challenging project. DCR has not decided how to redesign the tunnel so the MEPA process offers a valuable opportunity for the community to outline its concerns, suggest assessment strategies and information gathering. The MA process is a thoughtful and rigorous one and can help structure the debate about important issues: what should be built, how should the construction be mitigated and what are the long-term implications of the options.

Commissioner Burrington urged the participants, community and civic groups to submit comment letters and to do so in a timely fashion. Letters are due to MEPA by the deadline of June 13, 2006.

Karl Haglund, DCR Regional Planner, used a PowerPoint presentation to lay out the four sets of options currently under consideration based on the work done to date and the public meetings in February and March. (The full presentation is available on DCR's web site: www.mass.gov/dcr.) The presentation included a short history of the Esplanade and Storrow Drive construction; information on four sets of options and examples of the options; a list of short and long-term impacts; and concerns about traffic impacts and mitigation. Mr. Haglund noted that DCR plans to hold traffic workshops with a number of groups and entities in the September/October time frame since the results of the Origin & Destination Study and CTPS data are not yet available. The DEIR will contain details on these studies and the workshop results.

Mr. Haglund said that DCR plans to read and respond to all of the issues raised in letters submitted to MEPA in the DEIR for the project.

Discussion

Ms. Buckley asked for comments and questions from the audience.

Linda Cox, the Esplanade Association, asked who will make the final decision on the alternative. Commissioner Burrington said that DCR will make the decision in conjunction with the Secretaries of Environmental Affairs and Transportation.

Peter Sherin, Neighborhood Association of Back Bay, asked if the Storrow Drive project will be completed before or after the Longfellow Bridge project. Many people in the community feel that the two projects should not be undertaken simultaneously. Mr. Haglund said that the decision has not been made yet and it will depend to a large extent on the results of the traffic analysis, which is not yet available. It will also depend on where each of the project is in terms of environmental and design work.

Steve Kaiser, Cambridge, suggested an alternative that signalizes the inbound traffic and puts outbound traffic in a tunnel. He said that it is difficult for the agency to advocate for some of the alternatives but not hard for the advocates to do so. He believes that the traffic analysis needs to have a broad reach, from River St. and Western Ave. to the O'Brien Highway and Bridge St., in Cambridge along the length of Memorial Drive and in Boston over to Commonwealth Ave. The EIR should contain a construction staging and traffic plan. Mr. Kaiser would also like to see both manual traffic counts and modeling of the traffic. He said that ASHTO standards are not applicable to a parkway and he hopes that MassHighway will not apply them; he believes there is no evidence that they improve safety. Mr. Kaiser said the planning should address concerns on the Hatch Shell and noise controls.

Tom Fawcett, representing Boston University, asked about plans for work on the BU Bridge and said that DCR should be considering the amount of development and construction ongoing. He asked what the status of repairs to the BU Bridge is. David Lenhardt, DCR, said that the 75% design plans are under review and the project should be under construction within a year. The work should take less than two years, so it will be completed before the Storrow Drive project commences.

Patrice Todisco, The Esplanade Association, said that the EIR should address impacts on the entire Esplanade of the at grade alternatives. She said that it is difficult to assess these proposals without the traffic data. Mr. Haglund agreed since one or more turn lanes may be required to make the at grade alternatives work. He said that is the kind of comment Ms. Todisco should make to MEPA. He noted that DCR plans to organize traffic information workshops to share that kind of information when it is available.

Peter Thomson, Beacon Hill Civic Association, asked about the impact of Longfellow Bridge construction and how DCR is involved in that project. He is concerned that there are too many unknowns related to planning and scheduling the projects. Mr. Lenhardt said that DCR is aware of and involved in planning and design of

both projects; no decision has been made on the timing of either one yet. There are actually seven bridge projects that DCR is working with MassHighway on, and the coordination is ongoing from Commissioner to Project Manager level.

Peter Sherin, Neighborhood Association of Back Bay, reminded DCR that the proposed Silver Line III portal is not far from Arlington St. and the tunnel. There is a great deal of planned work to keep track of. Newbury St. is an important destination for many residents and visitors to Boston, and it's an economic engine. The planning should take this value into account.

Chris Weller agreed with Steve Kaiser that many projects are 10% design and 90% advocacy. He quoted Fred Salvucci's observation that half of the cost of the Big Dig was devoted to managing traffic. He thought he heard Mr. Haglund diminish the importance of the Storrow Drive project relative to the Longfellow Bridge. Mr. Haglund said to the contrary, Storrow Drive is a more complex challenge and will take longer to work through from a design and public review perspective. Mr. Weller suggested that DCR is not heeding the dangers presented by its other bridges; for example, a large chunk of granite fell off Reed Overpass. He said the Storrow Drive process is a good one, but no one knows what is happening with other bridges and roadways. Mr. Haglund said that DCR is looking at seven major bridge projects. There is a relatively long timetable for working on all of them, and they can't be done simultaneously. The BU Bridge was expedited since the work is relatively straightforward and it could fit into the timetable at the front of the line of projects. Mr. Weller listed a number of prospective projects – Urban Ring, Red-Blue Line extender, Silver Line, etc., and observed that there remains a challenge between openness and moving forward swiftly to address deficiencies and new projects.

Patrice Todisco commented on Mr. Haglund's suggestion that Post Office Square could be a model for Storrow Drive. She said the traffic volume is much smaller and the PO Square project included extra funding to provide for the park maintenance. That is something that the Storrow Drive project should include since it is so difficult to secure funding for landscaping and upkeep.

Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association, asked about the difference between the 75-year design life for the tunnels and the 45-year design life for the reconstruction option. She observed that no one wants to go through this process twice in a lifetime. Mike McCall, SGH, said that the rehabilitation option does not include all new material unlike the tunnels, which would be new (steel, concrete, etc.). Karl Haglund said that this is one of the tradeoffs that DCR wants comments on. Ms. Mainzer-Cohen said that BBA met with Secretary Coglianò to discuss Storrow Drive and related issues. At this point in time, it's almost impossible to choose an alternative without the traffic data. A great deal more information is necessary for decision making, including a wider perspective on traffic and a better understanding of how the ecosystem will work.

Deirdre Buckley encouraged the group representatives and individuals in attendance to include these kinds of comments in letters to MEPA on the ENF. The

DEIR will be more useful if it includes the kind of information people want to see to make their decisions. Alternatives, data, details that should be included in the DEIR should be suggested as part of the current public process.

David Watson, Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition, said that the impacts on bike riders could be significant during construction, particularly if the Esplanade is used for laydown. Bicycle impacts should also be considered when evaluating the at grade roadway options. Mr. Haglund agreed and said that there are plans to improve the bicycle route along the Storrow Drive side of the lagoon as part of another project.

Bill August, President of the Dana Park Neighborhood Association in Cambridgeport, said that at this point it is difficult to understand the differences between many of the options very well. In general, the Dana Park neighborhood feels that many of the roadways and bridges in the area are already at capacity (BU Bridge, Memorial Drive and the Mass Ave. bridge). DCR should be looking to the Mass Turnpike, which encroaches less on the neighborhoods. In addition, at the Morse School meeting, speakers stressed the importance of considering the broader transportation issues, alternatives to the use of cars and options such as incentives to use mass transit. Mr. August said that right now, it's a huge headache for Cambridge residents to get through local bottlenecks.

Linda Cox added that the Storrow Drive Tunnel Project provides an opportunity to reduce traffic volume permanently. For the environment as a whole, the project is a perfect pilot program. There are models in other cities, such as Tulsa, where employees are offered incentives, for example, to tele-commute. These ideas should be explored.

A meeting participant noted the phenomenal success of the Alewife Station and parking lot and asked if it would be possible to add another garage. Would a mandate from citizen's groups help DCR in this regard? Mr. Haglund said that DCR is including the MBTA in its planning discussions. That kind of comment should also be made to MEPA.

Representative Marty Walz said that this kind of message needs to be reinforced to get the MBTA's attention, and she plans to work to include the agency in this kind of thinking and planning. The MBTA is holding hearings on fare hikes with no improvements in service, and that is the kind of change – such as increasing capacity – that needs to take place to support this project. Deirdre Buckley suggested that the participants should specify this kind of goal or information in their comment letters.

Peter Sherin suggested that the Esplanade is overused between March and November and this project offers the opportunity to undertake an inventory of the city's other park resources and try to balance the uses across the parks.

Ms. Mainzer-Cohen observed that the Back Bay is an economic engine for the region in terms of housing, hotels and office space. Storrow Drive is the only road that brings visitors to the area, and without vehicular access, Back Bay will become a ghost

town. Massachusetts is struggling to keep jobs and isolating Back Bay could further damage the city's economy.

Carrie Russell, Conservation Law Foundation, stressed that transit options must be considered as part of the review process. During the construction period, people will come to see how convenient mass transit is. MEPA should require coordination and funding with the MBTA.

Chris Weller suggested that the Red Line should be free, supported by DCR, during the construction. He directed the participants' attention to page 6 of the Supplementary Narrative of the ENF, which refers to another alternative – construction of a tunnel, lengthwise, below the Charles River. Mr. Weller said he has received strong support for this alternative and he encouraged meeting participants to comment on the river tunnel option to MEPA. Mr. Weller observed that improvements may be needed to keep the existing tunnel safe for the next few years as the design is completed.

Mr. Haglund noted that DCR and its consultants are watching and repairing the tunnel and have been doing so for the last 20 years. That cost will continue to escalate and become unpredictable. As to the tunnel option, Mr. Haglund said that MEPA could ask DCR to evaluate it, although he sees some difficulties in building a tunnel beneath the river. He said that several people have come forward with interesting ideas and alternatives, which are present in the alternatives options.

Mr. Thomson said the Beacon Hill Civic Association will have a letter ready in two to three weeks. Without the full traffic picture, it will be difficult to choose an option. Mr. Haglund said this is not a final comment letter, but one that outlines the issues that BHCA is interested in getting more information on.

Bill August asked which parts of the tunnel are most vulnerable at this time. Mike McCall, SGH, said the roof is carrying a higher load than it was designed for and over time, the roof beams and reinforcing rods have been damaged. Now there is damage in the retaining walls as well. Water leaking into the tunnel is causing part of the damage.

Mr. Kaiser suggested that mitigation will be important during construction since any limiting of access will not be good for the Back Bay. He suggested closing down the Clarendon St. off ramp and reversing the last block.

Ms. Buckley and Mr. Haglund thanked the participants for attending and reminded them to submit comment letters to MEPA by **June 13** to ensure that their concerns are reviewed in the process.

ATTENDANCE – 2 PM

Rep. Marty Walz	Boston
David Jackson	Mass General Hospital
Tom Fawcett	Boston University
P. Todisco	The Esplanade Association
Frank K. Johnson	BTA
Kathy Campbell	CDW
Steven Rich	Fisher College
Beatrice Nessen	Beacon Hill resident – CRWA
Peter Sherin	Neighborhood Association of Back Bay
Bill August	Dana Park Neighborhood Association
Jane Howard	Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates
Linda Cox	Esplanade advocate
Carrie Russell	Conservation Law Foundation
Peter Thomson	Beacon Hill Civic Association
Joe Walsh	Boston University
S. Comeau	
Nikko Mendoza	Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services
Michael Donovan	Boston University
K. Varanasi	CBT Architects
Bette Dench (unclear)	Dana Park Neighborhood Association
Jacqueline Freeman	Beacon Hill Times
David Watson	MassBike
Stephen Burrington	DCR
Bernadette O'Malley	DCR
Karl Haglund	DCR
Jim Baecker	DCR
Dave Lenhardt	DCR
Mike McCall	SGH
Nancy Farrell	RVA
Victoria Fletcher	Epsilon Associates
Katie Lesser	Epsilon Associates
Steve Kaiser	Cambridge
Meg Mainzer-Cohen	Back Bay Association

Storrow Drive ENF SCOPING SESSION
May 11, 2006 – Gardner Auditorium, State House, Boston
6:30 PM

Deirdre Buckley of the MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Environmental Policy Act Unit (MEPA Unit), opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. She repeated the remarks she had made earlier in the day about the MEPA process (see page 1). Once an ENF is filed, it triggers a public review and comment period, followed by a Certificate from the Secretary of Environmental Affairs outlining the scope of the project, including what alternatives must be studied, what environmental impacts must be analyzed and what techniques this analysis must follow. The Secretary's Certificate for this project will be issued by June 23, 2006.

Ms. Buckley said that DCR has already done a good job of soliciting input from the public in a series of meetings that has helped to shape the alternatives. The scoping sessions provide an important opportunity for her to understand community concerns. She stressed that the communities of interest need to submit **written** comments during the comment period, which has been extended by DCR's request to 45 days (from 30) to encourage community participation, and closes on **June 13, 2006**. Comments should include the EOEA reference number (#13777) and be directed to Ms. Buckley at the MEPA Unit (Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, MEPA Unit, 100 Cambridge St., Suite 900, Boston 02114-2524).

Project Proponent

DCR's Deputy Commissioner of Planning and Engineering, Karst Hoozeboom welcomed the participants and summarized DCR's approach to the Storrow Drive Tunnel Project. DCR views the project as both an infrastructure and parks improvement project, and it has committed to a thorough public involvement and environmental review process to investigate and choose an alternative. Mr. Hoozeboom encouraged members of the audience to submit comments and stay involved in the project.

Karl Haglund, DCR Regional Planner, used a PowerPoint presentation to lay out the four sets of options currently under consideration based on the work done to date and the public meetings in February and March. (The full presentation is available on DCR's web site: www.mass.gov/dcr.) The presentation included a short history of the Esplanade and Storrow Drive construction; information on four sets of options and examples of the options; a list of short and long-term impacts; and concerns about traffic impacts and mitigation. Mr. Haglund noted that DCR plans to hold traffic workshops with a number of groups and entities in the September/October time frame since the results of the Origin & Destination Study and CTPS data are not yet available. The DEIR will contain details on these studies and the workshop results.

Discussion

A member of the audience asked if DCR is planning a route through or over the Esplanade using floating bridges. Mr. Haglund said that at this point, DCR has only looked at temporary bridges over a construction zone. The staging details have not yet been worked out for all of the alternatives.

Renata Von Tscharnier, Charles River Conservancy, said traffic analysis should investigate the concept that vehicles can be carried on other highways and indicate if the results show the locations of new bottlenecks. The EIR should investigate how to address this and other issues, and should include diversion of traffic to the MassTurnpike, the use of shuttles, etc.

Elliott Laffer, Boston Groundwater Trust, suggested that DCR remove the westbound exit at Otter St. and the westbound entrance at Berkeley St. The Bowker Overpass handles more than the rest of this traffic load. The traffic analysis needs to look at where this traffic spills out to Back Bay and other regions. He added that the surface road options will help with groundwater issues in the Back Bay.

A meeting participant said the traffic analysis should include waiting time at the intersection of Beacon and Arlington Streets and on Storrow Drive at Charles Circle, either going to Cambridge or down Charles St.

Another participant asked if DCR is looking at pedestrian and bicycle counts and users. Karl Haglund said that counts have been done at Leverett Circle and other locations and will be included in the review.

A member of the audience asked if DCR is considering the use of any pre-fabricated construction methods, which might help with traffic issues. Mr. Haglund said that is a good topic for the DEIR.

Rep. Marty Walz asked if DCR has met with the MBTA, which will have an important role in providing service during construction. Mr. Haglund said that the MBTA has identified a staff member who will work on the project. DCR will have the preliminary traffic analysis in the summer and will set up a meeting with the MBTA at that time, after the main congestion points have been identified and the discussion can focus on how to improve service in those areas. Rep. Walz said DCR could be using this time to talk to the MBTA about long-term service questions. The T cannot just add Green Line cars, for example, it has to budget for and order them. The MBTA should be actively planning for this project now.

A participant referred to the proposed traffic workshops in the fall and asked if businesses will be involved. Mr. Haglund said there isn't a formal list of participants yet, and the speaker should make that comment to MEPA.

Ms. Von Tscharnier said that the bike path in the Esplanade needs repairs and improvements and there is a great deal more work that should be done in the park. It would make sense to do it at the same time as this work is going on. Mr. Haglund encouraged her to submit those comments to MEPA.

Mr. Laffer suggested that the Longwood Medical Area should be involved in the traffic data review because of the shuttle buses that transport people between medical facilities.

Chris Weller, Cambridge, listed a number of projects in planning or design stages such as the Urban Ring, Harvard University North Allston development, Red-Blue Line Connector, and others that DCR should be aware of or coordinating with. He directed the participants' attention to page 6 of the Supplementary Narrative of the ENF, which refers to another alternative – construction of a tunnel, lengthwise, below the Charles River. Mr. Weller said he has received strong support for this alternative and he encouraged meeting participants to comment on the river tunnel option to MEPA. Mr. Weller observed that improvements may be needed to keep the existing tunnel safe for the next few years as the design is completed. He said those who want more information can find details on the Helen Osborne Storrow Immersed Tube Tunnel at [www. HOSITT.us](http://www.HOSITT.us) or on Wikipedia.

A member of the audience asked about the tunnel option including a ventilation building. Mr. Haglund said there has been no support for a vent building. Another option includes ventilated roofs. These kinds of alternatives need to be carefully reviewed by the community.

Rep. Walz reminded DCR that the only playground in Back Bay is on Commonwealth Ave. at Clarendon St. and safety will be crucial during the construction. This will be a particularly challenging site to protect and keep open.

Susan Barrow-Williams from Community Boating said that safe access for pedestrians to the site on the Esplanade is crucial both during construction and over the long term. The at grade options provide easy access to the Esplanade and that is a goal for the organization. The Charles River is a heavily used recreational resource and access must be preserved.

Ms. Buckley and Mr. Haglund thanked the participants for attending and reminded them to submit comment letters to MEPA by June 13 to ensure that their concerns are reviewed in the process.

ATTENDANCE – 6:30 PM

Rep. Marty Walz	Boston
Susan Barrow-Williams	Community Boating
Atis Liepins	SGH
C. Comeau	
Aaron Read	
Elliott Laffer	Boston Groundwater Trust
Chris Weller	H.O.S. Assn
Charlie Jewell	Boston Water and Sewer Commission
Deborah Carrow	Liberty Mutual
David Spiller	
Pardis Saffari	Downtown Crossing Association/WalkBoston
Frank K. Johnson	Boston Traffic Department
Renata Von Tscharnier	Charles River Conservancy
Edwin Kaplan	Community Boating
Nan Bianco	
Steve Young	BHCA
Kathryn Maynes	
Karst Hoogeboom	DCR
Bernadette O'Malley	DCR
Karl Haglund	DCR
Jim Baecker	DCR
Dave Lenhardt	DCR
Mike McCall	SGH
Nancy Farrell	RVA
Victoria Fletcher	Epsilon Associates
Katie Lesser	Epsilon Associates